

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /073 W

----- 037785

R 131635Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4473

INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

USUN NEW YORK 985

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAPE TOWN 0288

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, SF, RH

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER VORSTER'S VIEWS ON RHODESIA

1. SUMMARY: DURING MY FAREWELL CALL MARCH 12, PRIME MINISTER VORSTER SPOKE AT SOME LENGTH ABOUT HIS INVOLVEMENT IN RHODESIAN SITUATION, REFLECTING SOME OBVIOUS DISAPPOINTMENT AND CONCERN AT CURRENT BREAKDOWN BUT NOTED THAT HE IS TRYING HIS BEST TO HELP BRING ABOUT A SETTLEMENT AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO. VORSTER IS CLEARLY CONCERNED AT EFFECT FAILURE TO SETTLE RHODESIAN PROBLEM WILL HAVE ON DETENTE AND ON EFFORTS SOLVE NAMIBIAN PROBLEM. END SUMMARY.

2. VORSTER SAID HE WAS IN PRETORIA LAST WEEKEND TO MEET SOCIALLY WITH THE TWO AFRIKAANS-SPEAKING MEMBERS OF IAN SMITH'S CABINET.

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(HE DID NOT NAME THEM BUT WE ASSUME THESE ARE DEFENSE

AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER PIETER VAN DER BYL AND INFORMATION. IMMIGRATION AND TOURISM MINISTER WICKUS DE KOCK.) HIS PURPOSE, HE SAID, WAS TO TRY TO INSULATE THEM (AND OTHER AFRIKANER RHODESIANS) FROM EFFORTS OF THE "HERZOGITES" (SUPPORTERS OF THE RIGHT WING HERSTIGDE NATIONALE PARTEI IN SOUTH AFRICA) TO GET THEM TO STIR UP TROUBLE AGAINST VORSTER POLITICALLY WITH CLAIMS THAT HE IS ABANDONING RHODESIAN WHITES.

3. VORSTER SAID HE PLANS MEETING WITH SMITH ON MARCH 24 (BUT HE DID NOT SAY WHERE) TO DISCUSS HANDLING OF CRISIS CREATED BY ARREST OF NDABANINGI SITHOLE. IF SMITH CONTINUES TO DETAIN SITHOLE WITHOUT OPEN TRIAL, THEN BY TIME OF APRIL 7 OAU MEETING, ONLY TWO WEEKS OFF, PRESIDENTS KAUNDA AND NYERERE WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE FORCED TO JOIN MORE RADICAL AFRICAN LEADERS AND TAKE HARD LINE ON RHODESIA TO PRESERVE THEIR CREDIBILITY IN AFRICA. IF THIS HAPPENED, VORSTER COULD SEE NOTHING BUT CONFLICT AHEAD FOR RHODESIA.

4. HE SAID HE WOULD BE MAKING PUBLIC SPEECH ON RHODESIA SOON TO MAKE CLEAR THAT SOUTH AFRICA IS NOT LETTING RHODESIA DOWN BUT THAT THERE ARE GREAT DIFFICULTIES AHEAD, AND WHILE SAG IS DOING EVERYTHING IT CAN TO HELP FIND SETTLEMENT, IT CANNOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR RESULTS OF ACTIONS TAKEN BY RHODESIANS THEMSELVES. THEY HAD SET THEIR OWN POLICY OF SHARING POLITICAL POWER WITH ALL THE POPULATION AND THEY MUST BE PREPARED TO CARRY IT OUT. HE COMMENTED THAT THERE ARE STILL SOME RHODESIANS WHO NEVER WANTED CHANGE AND STILL THINK CHANGE IS UNNECESSARY, AND THAT MANY OF THE WHITES DID NOT FULLY APPRECIATE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION.

5. VORSTER SEEMED DISAPPOINTED THAT IAN SMITH SEEMS TO HAVE BACKED AWAY FROM EARLIER COMMITMENT TO CONSIDER MORE LIBERAL QUALIFIED FRANCHISE. ON OTHER HAND, IN SOME MATTERS, LIKE RELEASING DETAINEES, SMITH HAD BEEN ABLE TO POINT TO CONTINUING VIOLENCE ON PART OF ZANU. WHILE SA HAD DONE ALL IT COULD TO GET SMITH TO KEEP HIS END OF AGREEMENTS, VORSTER FELT KAUNDA AND NYERERE HAD NOT FULLY LIVED UP TO THEIR END OF UNDERSTANDING, AS THEY USUALLY CAME UP WITH SOME EXCUSE WHY THEY WERE UNABLE TO KEEP SITHOLE UNDER SOME CONTROL, GET ZANU STOP FIGHTING, CONFIDENTIAL

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OR GET ANC TO CARRY OUT ITS COMMITMENTS.

6. VORSTER IS CLEARLY CONCERNED ABOUT EFFECT RHODESIAN SITUATION WILL HAVE ON DETENTE AND IS WORRIED THAT CURRENT BREAKDOWN WILL LIMIT HIS ABILITY TO PURSUE OTHER AFRICAN CONTACTS. ASKED ABOUT NAMIBIA, HE BELIEVED A SOLUTION COULD BE FOUND FOR THE NAMIBIAN PROBLEM BUT NOT WITHOUT FIRST ACHIEVING REAL PROGRESS IN RHODESIA. CHANCES OF FINDING A REASONABLE APPROACH IN

NAMIBIA WILL BE CLOUDED BY THE RHODESIA PROBLEM. HE DID NOT THINK UN SYG WALDHEIM COULD HELP IN NAMIBIA SITUATION AS WALDHEIM SEEMED MORE INTERESTED IN KEEPING JOB AS SYG THAN IN TAKING STATESMAN-LIKE STEPS TO FIND REASONABLE SOLUTION.

7. COMMENT: VORSTER IS CLEARLY NOT SANGUINE ABOUT A CONSTANT AND RELATIVELY QUICK MOVEMENT TOWARDS SOLUTION OF THE RHODESIA PROBLEM. NEVERTHELESS, I AM CONVINCED HE INTENDS TO KEEP TIGHTENING THE SCREWS IN ORDER TO TRY TO BRING IT ABOUT. HE SEES THE ALTERNATIVE AS NOT AN ESCALATION OF TERRORISM BUT AS A TRANSITION TO FULL-SCALE WARFARE IN WHICH HE DOES NOT WANT SOUTH AFRICA TO BE FORCED TO BE INVOLVED.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975CAPET00288
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750088-0825
From: CAPE TOWN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750355/aaaabxmj.tel
Line Count: 129
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20 MAY 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <20 MAY 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRIME MINISTER VORSTER'S VIEWS ON RHODESIA
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, SF, RH, (VORSTER, BALTHAZAR JOHANNES)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006